Louisiana Politics

Life Threatened, But Governor Napped

By BILL LYNCH
(States-Item Bureau)

BATON ROUGE—When word of a threat against the governor's life was received by members of Gov. John McKeithen's party in Mobile, Ala., they were in a hotel.

There were two Louisiana state policemen, an Alabama state policeman assigned as a routine matter, and aides to the governor.

The policemen and the aides increased their security with even the aides arming themselves with pistols and doing their best to keep the governor off the streets.

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The alleged suspect was a convict just out of the Angola penitentiary who purportedly was en route to Mobile to fill a "contract" on the governor's life. Gen. Thomas D. Burbank, head of the Department of Public Safety, notified the governor and alerted Alabama authorities.

Alabama police spotted the suspect about a hundred miles from the city and followed him to a Mobile motel. Had he made any effort to enter town, they planned to pick him up.

Gen. Burbank reported later that there had been four threats against the governor, including the one on his trip to Mobile where he attended the Interstate Oil Compact Commission meeting June 10-11.

McKeithen reportedly shrugged off the report when he first heard it and within 10 minutes was taking a nap.

The other threats are still under investigation by the state police.

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MEANWHILE, THE GOVERNOR HAS just about left the Legislature to sink or swim on its own accord. Many who would like to see forceful leadership demonstrated are calling it the worst session they've ever seen as far as accomplishing anything is concerned.

When asked about exerting leadership, McKeithen is quick to remind boh lawmakers and the press that when he does he's accused of being a dictator.

There is little to indicate now that the governor won't be in any less trouble in Sepember than during the current legislative session on raising taxes. The planned 15-day special session won't be enough unless the goveror can get the Legislature to agreed ahead of time on a tax program that's equitable in its application and not overboard in its amount.

One of the saving tactors that arrived on the scene in time is a proposal in Congress to add a Shreveport to New Orleans link to the Interstate Highway System. This eliminates completely the doubtful toll road proposition that was being pushed and also the need for four-laning the route.

But the governor well knows that in order to put a tax program through in 15 days he'll have to come in with one that's sold and not subject to much change. If he plans any appropriations out of the income, then the appropriation bills will have to be passed with five days left in the session.

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REP. EMERY VILLAR OF GONZALES will attempt to save his single-shot voting machine bill next week by removing the amendment which would require candidates to run in divisions. The original bill simply eliminates the necessity for voting for all offices in a multioffice race.

Labor leader Victor Bussie, who opposes the division method, is in favor of eliminating the single-shot device which has been blamed for a great part in machine malfunctions and inaccurate vote counts.

Bussie opposes the division method on the grounds it would not permit a voter to vote for the same men if the two ran against each other in a particular division. On the other hand he says that the requirement on multoffice voting makes voters vote for candidaes they know nothing about and might not even support.

The counter argument is that a true majority can't be obtained and it sets up a situation whereby minority or special interest groups could gain an advantage by concentrating on one or two candidates.

Both sides have good arguments, but there is one thing certain—the voting machines aren't doing the job they are supposed to do—accurately tabulating ballots—and something ought to be done.

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